

lost their lives, 5,000 evacuated from their homes, 1,200 in refuge in emergency shelters. The storms themselves have not yet abated. We offer our thoughts, our prayers, our resolve to help to those who have lost family members, those who have been uprooted.

A short while ago, I spoke to our FEMA Director, James Lee Witt. He is already working with the Texas officials to assess the damage, and the budget I am about to sign contains nearly \$1 billion in additional resources to FEMA so that this vital agency will be even stronger as it works to address this and future disasters. For now, the Nation stands ready to assist the people of Texas in their time of need.

Wye River Talks

Q. Mr. President, will the Wye talks cancel your trip to California tomorrow in order to be available to continue the Middle East negotiations?

Q. Can they still succeed at Wye?

The President. I'm going back today to work on this. As you know, I got home at 3 o'clock last night. We're working hard through it. This incident in Israel is certainly a complicating factor. I have been briefed on the progress of events this morning, and we're going to work as hard as we can today and we'll have more to say about it as events unfold.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:28 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Statement on Signing the Year 2000 Information and Readiness Disclosure Act

October 19, 1998

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 2392, the "Year 2000 Information and Readiness Disclosure Act."

As our Nation prepares for the year 2000 (Y2K), we face an urgent need to address the Y2K problem, which may cause computers and embedded systems that run America's critical infrastructure to malfunction or even shut down. With little over a year until January 1, 2000, this is a serious global chal-

lenge that businesses and governments around the world must address.

Today, my Council on Year 2000 Conversion is launching "National Y2K Action Week," to urge small- and medium-sized businesses to take the necessary steps to ensure that the technologies they and their business partners depend upon are ready for the year 2000. Over the next 5 days, the Small Business Administration, the Department of Commerce, and several other Federal agencies will host Y2K educational events at their field offices across the Nation. As part of this week, we are also urging State, local, tribal governments, and community organizations to address this critical problem. More than 160 national organizations representing industries, professions, government, and the nonprofit sector have joined the Council in promoting Y2K action during this week.

This legislation will help provide businesses, governments, and other organizations with the necessary informational tools to overcome the Y2K computer problem. This Act, which builds upon a proposal my Administration submitted to the Congress in July, is an important bipartisan accomplishment. I particularly want to thank those in the Congress whose hard work and support of this legislation made its passage possible. Representatives Horn, Kucinich, Morella, Barcia, Leach, LaFalce, Hyde, Conyers, Dreier, and Esch and Senators Bennett, Dodd, Hatch, Leahy, and Kyl were integral to getting this work done and done quickly.

Many organizations have been reluctant to share valuable information about their experiences in dealing with the Y2K problem or the status of their Y2K efforts for fear of lawsuits. The Act's limited liability protections will promote and encourage greater information sharing about both experiences and solutions, which will significantly enhance public and private sector efforts to prepare the Nation's computer systems for the new millennium. However, the bill will not affect liability that may arise from Y2K failures of systems or devices.

While I understand that companies have a wide range of concerns related to the Y2K transition and potential litigation, we must

also protect the rights of consumers. Therefore, this legislation is focused exclusively on exposure related to information exchange and would not cover statements to individual consumers in marketing a product normally used for personal use.

Firms within an industry confront similar challenges as they work to ensure that their computer systems are Y2K compliant. Although the Department of Justice has already indicated that competitors in an industry who merely share information on Y2K solutions would not be in violation of the antitrust laws, this Act creates a specific exemption from the antitrust laws for these activities. The limited antitrust exemption created by S. 2392 will make it easier for firms to cooperate with one another to solve the Y2K problem while continuing to protect consumers from industry agreements to boycott, allocate a market, or fix prices or output.

Information sharing will be important not only to those who have already made progress addressing the Y2K problem, but also to the many small business and State, local, and tribal governments that are just beginning their Y2K work. I urge trade associations and umbrella organizations to collect such information from their members and provide it to others through websites and other means devoted to discussing Y2K experiences and solutions. My Council on Year 2000 Conversion looks forward to working with Federal agencies, other levels of government, and consumer and industry groups in expanding the website, *www.y2k.gov*, that already supports activities related to our Nation's efforts to address issues related to the Y2K transition.

The Y2K problem is an enormous challenge, and we must meet it. Enactment of this legislation is a significant achievement toward allowing all of us to take a successful step into the new millennium.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
October 19, 1998.

NOTE: S. 2392, approved October 19, was assigned Public Law No. 105-271.

Statement on Violence in the Republic of Georgia

October 19, 1998

I am deeply disturbed by reports of violence in the western part of the Republic of Georgia, where heavily-armed opposition forces seized hostages and clashed with Government troops today.

The United States strongly supports the democratically-elected Government of Georgia, headed by President Eduard Shevardnadze, and the stability, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Georgia.

We are glad that the opposition forces decided late today to release their hostages, and we call on the opposition forces to resolve their differences with the Government through peaceful and democratic means rather than by armed confrontation.

Executive Order 13104— Amendment to Executive Order 13021, Tribal Colleges and Universities

October 19, 1998

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended (5 U.S.C. App.), and in order to provide for the continuation of the President's Board of Advisors on Tribal Colleges and Universities, it is hereby ordered that section 7 of Executive Order 13021 is amended to read "The Board shall terminate on September 30, 1999, unless the Board is renewed by the President prior to that date."

William J. Clinton

The White House,
October 19, 1998.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register,
8:45 a.m., October 21, 1998]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on October 22.